DOCUMENT RESUME

TE 000 495

ED 021 840

By-Raushenbush, John

THE STUDENT AS TEACHER.

Pub Date Dec 67
Note-3p
Journal Cit-The Independent School Bulletin; v27 n2 p35-6 Dec 1967
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.20
Descriptors-*ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, EXPERIMENTAL TEACHING, *PEER TEACHING, SECONDARY EDUCATION, *STUDENT PARTICIPATION, STUDENT SEMINARS, TEACHING METHODS, TUTORING

Through "preparing-to-teach," students at Fountain Valley School, Colorado Springs, felt that they learned material better and gained confidence and personal satisfaction. Their interest in teaching began with two unrelated projects--(1) an "older brother" project in which 11th- and 12th-grade boys tutored elementary students from predominantly Negro neighborhoods, and (2) a classroom project in which students gave 15-minute lectures and led discussions on their research papers. These projects led to the inclusion of a two-part program in the senior high English curriculum. In the first part, students lectured and led discussions on topics relevant to a number of assigned works from classic and modern literature. The other part involved assigning two seniors to a ninth- or 10th-grade English class where they (1) observed the class for 3 days, (2) completed evaluation forms on the class, and (3) collaborated with the teacher on preparing lesson plans for three class periods. (LH)

DECEMBER 1967

The INDEPENDENT SCHOOL BULLETIN

Volume 27, No. 2

*Prizewinning article

EDPRESS

Printed in U.S.A.

The Student As Teacher

By JOHN RAUSHENBUSH

IN an effort to take advantage of student interest and activity, the English Department at Fountain Valley School embarked upon an experiment in which students teach students. Our interest in this venture began in two comparatively unrelated areas.

Every week during the 1966 Spring term, a group of eleventh- and twelfth-grade boys went to an elementary school in a predominantly Negro neighborhood of Colorado Springs for sessions in which they acted as tutor-older-brothers for the children of the area. Each "tutor" was assigned an elementary school student whom he stayed with for the remainder of the school year, coaching him in creative-writing projects, fractions and decimals, geography, history and current events. The youngsters were bright but unmotivated, and our task was to try to provide a little of the intellectual stimulation and pride in the pursuit of knowledge that was apparently lacking in their homes. Our boys were wonderfully involved in and moved by the experience, partly because of the relationships they formed with their tutees, and partly because of the satisfaction they derived as "teachers," helping their students learn. Of the twelve Juniors who participated that first year, eleven continued last year; and the total number of tutors grew from fifteen to thirty-one.

The second experience that contributed to the plan for having students teach developed out of a senior English project. Each student in the class wrote a major paper which was "to analyze a contemporary issue prevalent in current literature." The students selected such topics as "Anonymity and the Search for Identity," "The Influence of THE BOMB on Modern Civilization," "The Negro's Struggle for Self-Esteem," and "The Quest of Muddled Youth"—to name a few of the titles; and they pored over such material as *The Cool World* and *The Invisible Man*, *On the Beach* and *Fail-Safe*, Malamud's *The Assistant;* plays by Miller, Williams, O'Neill, Hansberry, and Chayefsky; and the poetry of Bly, Lowell, Gunn, Wilbur, and Ferlinghetti.

In the midst of their research, each one was asked to prepare the structure of a classroom hour on one particular aspect of his general paper's subject, an aspect he felt lent itself to the fifteen-minute lecture he was to deliver and the ensuing class discussion he was to lead. He could assign the class a reasonable amount of reading in connection with his lecture topic, and the class in turn was expected to criticize the lecture and the class leader's performance. For example, the student who wrote "The Influence of THE BOMB on Modern Civilization" assigned his class a novel by Peter George, based on the screenplay *Dr. Strangelove,* and lectured on the subject, "Anticipation of THE BOMB." In the short self-evaluation the students were asked to write upon completion of the unit, all reacted in about the same way —they felt they had never learned anything so well as when they were preparing to teach it. In addition, a number of them expressed surprise at finding that they not only made it through the ordeal, but that they really, obviously, "did themselves proud" before their peers and before their teacher.

THE outcome of this was that when we planned last year's curriculum, we decided to include formally more of the "preparing-to-teach-it" element.[1] The first part of the new program was an almost direct carry-over from the 1966 experience, in terms both of requirements and of student reaction. A class of Seniors read a number of works from classical and modern literature involving the "curse of the House of Atreus" legend. Each student was assigned a topic requiring the presentation of a fifteen-to-twenty-minute lecture followed by class discussion, over which he presided. Topics ranged from "Aeschylus' Influence on Seneca's *Thyestes*" to "Eugene O'Neill and the Curse of the House of Mannon." The class was in the hands of the teacher-for-the-day and, at the end of each lecture, critics were chosen to give an impromptu evaluation of his performance.

The second part of the 1966-67 program began with the assignment of two Seniors to each of the ninth- and tenth-grade English classes. They were expected

Mr. Raushenbush is Dean of Fountain Valley School, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

[1] Encouragement and helpful ideas for the project came from Mrs. Gernot Heinrichsdorff of the Colorado Springs School for Girls.

to observe this class in action for three days and to complete an evaluation form which included such questions as:

> What significant factors do you observe in the teacher's relationship with his class?
>
> Is the class response meagre? adequate? truly involved? Comment.
>
> Do you notice any distinction between the methods the teacher employs for instructing the less able students and the more able students?
>
> Did each student feel respected and valued? How could you tell?

Then, together with the teacher to whom he was assigned, each of the two students planned three class periods of teaching, to include the discussion of some specific element of composition, the analysis of a short piece of literature, and an in-class paper which he corrected and went over with his students. Some, for instance, worked on a simplified dramatic version of Melville's *Billy Budd,* while others taught ninth-graders the correct use of modifiers on the first day and a story from *Great Tales of Action and Adventure* on the second. After the student had finished his three-day stint, the class and the regular teacher filled out evaluation forms on the teacher-student's achievement, and then discussed it with him in conference.

It is difficult to say at this stage precisely what the venture will accomplish, but it seems likely that it will include, for the students, not only the element of thorough study and preparation, but also some personal satisfaction and some gain in self-confidence.

I call, therefore, a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of peace and war.

"Of Education"
JOHN MILTON (1608–1674)